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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-6549-6]

Agency Information Collection Activities: Submission for OMB
Review; Comment Request; Valuing Inland Water Quality Improvements

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Notice.

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SUMMARY: In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.), this document announces that the following proposed Information Collection Request (ICR) has been forwarded to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and approval: Valuing Inland Water Quality Improvements (EPA ICR number 1914.01). The ICR describes the nature of the information collection and its expected burden and cost; where appropriate, it includes the actual data collection instrument.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before April 10, 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For a copy of the ICR contact Sandy Farmer at EPA by phone at (202) 260-2740, by email at farmer.sandy@epa.gov, or download off the Internet at <http://www.epa.gov/icr> and refer to EPA ICR No. 1914.01. For technical questions about the ICR contact Dr. Alan Carlin, Office of Policy and Reinvention, Mail Code 2172, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, DC 20460, e-mail carlin.alan@epa.gov, phone 202-260-5499, FAX 202-260-7875.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Valuing Inland Water Quality Improvements (EPA ICR number

1914.01). This is a new collection.

Abstract: The purpose of this project is to develop economic benefit values for water quality improvements for lakes, rivers, and streams. These estimates are of substantial academic interest since past studies have been based on a water quality ladder, which is believed not to be as scientifically valid a construct for assessing water quality. The estimates may also be useful to the Agency in complying with the requirements of Executive Order 12866 requiring cost-benefit analysis of major Federal regulations. This project will explore how valuations are affected by use of the current EPA approach of specifying different dimensions of water quality such as swimming, fishing, and broader aquatic ecological effects. The findings will be pertinent to economists studying water quality changes, particularly with respect to the task of assessing benefit values for water quality policies. We expect to use data collected with the survey in determining the value of water quality improvements to households in the United States. We plan to recruit subjects randomly across the United States through telephone recruiting. Subjects will be asked to complete a computer survey from a disk, which will be mailed to them. Subjects without convenient access to a personal computer will be referred to a national commercial facility with computer access nearest their home for the purpose of completing the survey. Subjects will return the survey disk by mail when completed. Participation in the survey is voluntary. Respondents will have to expend time, effort, and in many cases travel expense to participate in the study. Avoiding bias in the sample towards individuals and groups who can more easily take the survey is an important concern. As a result, we will compensate subjects for their time (and travel if necessary) to avoid the selection bias that might otherwise result. This survey is innovative both in terms of the survey methodology and the substantive economic focus. On both of these dimensions the survey is breaking new ground. To maximize the research value of the survey, we will proceed iteratively. The version of the survey available now will undergo at least two pre-tests after OMB approves the ICR. These pretests will be designed to identify programming complications arising from the nature of the survey, as well as survey questions that can be refined to promote greater clarity and convergence in the iterative choice process used. The final structure of the survey will depend on how people respond to the draft questions. For example, on any initial pairwise choice question, the researchers seek to present an initial tradeoff where half of the subjects choose each alternative, in order to maximize convergence on tradeoff rates in the least possible number of iterative questions. After the pre-tests are completed, recruiting will proceed as described above.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a

currently valid OMB control number. The OMB control numbers for EPA's regulations are listed in 40 CFR part 9 and 48 CFR Chapter 15. The Federal Register document required under 5 CFR 1320.8(d) soliciting comments on this collection of information was published on November 12, 1999 (64 FR 61632); two comments were received.

Burden Statement: The annual public reporting burden for this collection of information will average between 50 minutes and 110 minutes per respondent. Burden means the total time, effort, or financial resources expended by persons to generate, maintain, retain, or disclose or provide information to or for a Federal agency. This includes the time needed to review instructions; develop, acquire, install, and utilize technology and systems for the purposes of collecting, validating, and verifying information, processing and maintaining information, and disclosing and providing information; adjust the existing ways to comply with any previously applicable instructions and requirements; train personnel to be able to respond to a collection of information; search data sources; complete and review the collection of information; and transmit or otherwise disclose the information.

Respondents/Affected Entities: Individuals/households.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 2,800.

Frequency of Response: One time.

Estimated Total Annual Hour Burden: 3,150 hours.

Estimated Total Annualized Capital and Operating & Maintenance Cost Burden: \$0.

Send comments on the Agency's need for this information, the accuracy of the provided burden estimates, and any suggested methods for minimizing respondent burden, including through the use of automated collection techniques to the following addresses. Please refer to EPA ICR No. 1914.01 in any correspondence.

Ms. Sandy Farmer, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Environmental Information, Collection Strategies Division (2822), 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20460;

and

Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Attention: Desk Officer for EPA, 725 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20503.

Dated: March 1, 2000.

Oscar Morales,

Director, Collection Strategies Division.

[FR Doc. 00-5801 Filed 3-9-00; 8:45 am]